



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

The expansion west and its impact on street names

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Image: List of 56 proposed street names, 1952. City of Alexandria.

By the mid 19th century, Alexandria's expansion westward saw a decline in the naming of streets for historical figures.

Instead, many new streets were named for prominent local families or adjacent property owners, such as Peyton Street, which was named for the landscaped home of Francis Peyton known as Peyton Gardens, and Daingerfield Road on the original West End, named for several generations of a family that had long given service to Alexandria.

Insert in Sec. 1. (b)		
New Name	Old Name	General Location
Ancell Lane	Richmond Lane	Monticello Park
Bragg Street	No Name	Lincolnia, south of Duke St.
Beauregard Street	Rte. 613, S. Walter Reed Drive	Between King & Duke Sts.
Calhoun Avenue	Patton Boulevard	Dowden Terrace
Charbliss Street	Seminary Drive	Dowden Terrace
Cockrell Avenue	No Name	Alnor Heights
Colfax Avenue	Marshall Boulevard	Dowden Terrace
Courtney Avenue	Courtney Drive	Courtney Subdivision
Dawes Avenue	Wainwright Blvd.	Dowden Terrace
Dearing Street	Brad Lee Street	Brad Lee Towers
DeBray Street	Candida St. (N-S portion)	Delta Subdivision
Donelson Street	Ft. Worth Drive	Delta Subdivision
Dove Street	Dale Street	Duke St.-Telegraph Road
Duke Street	Little River Turnpike	
Early Street	Ft. Williams Drive & Major Barbara Street & part of Old Mill Road	Delta
Echols Avenue	Forest Street	Washington Forest
Fairbanks Avenue	Gaile Street	Shirley Gardens
Fillmore Avenue	No Name	Ft. Ward Heights
	Washington Street	Washington Forest

After the Civil War, Alexandria's economy was in tatters and it took decades for the once prosperous city to regain its strength. New streets continued to be named for local families and adjacent landowners, and as the 20th century began, land developers often added their own names to projects, such as Rosemont, that were underway in the growing city.

When Alexandria annexed the town of Potomac in the early 1930s, several streets in that area had their names changed due to their duplication with streets in the older portion of the city. This tradition of naming streets continued largely uninterrupted until the early 1950s, when the size of Alexandria nearly doubled with the annexation of land from Fairfax County west of Quaker Lane to an area just west of the new Shirley Highway, a portion of Interstates 95 and 395.

When Alexandria annexed this huge land area and formed a new West End, the area was still largely rural with farms and large country estates and a population that totaled in the hundreds.

Plans were developed almost immediately to prepare for the transformation of the area from a rural backwater into a high density suburb, with a variety of housing choices including high-rise and garden apartment buildings, townhouses and single family homes, as well as new commercial and industrial development.

New modern infrastructure was desperately needed to support this change and the city wasted no time in developing plans for new roads, public buildings and other support services.



Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

On December 9, 1952, a city council committee convened to study streets in the annexed area announced a list of new names for 56 streets, a portion of which is seen here taken from the actual document, to be considered by council the following summer.

Under the new formal street naming policy, an "alphabetical grid" of street names was established in the newly annexed area. All streets running north to south were to be named after Confederate generals in alphabetical order, starting with Beauregard Street and moving eastward. This policy was recently rescinded by city council.

All roadways running east to west would be called avenues and named for United States presidents, vice presidents and prominent historical figures, also in alphabetical order. The east-west numbering system was also amended to begin with zero at the Potomac River waterfront and continue westward to the 6200 block at Shirley Highway in Lincolnia.

"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.